United Nations S/PV.8069

Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8069th meeting

Thursday, 12 October 2017, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	Italy	Mr. Lambertini
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

Maintenance of international peace and security

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17-32168 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Maintenance of international peace and security

The President (*spoke in French*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I warmly welcome the Secretary-General and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: Nine months ago, approximately 20 million people were at severe risk of famine in South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and north-eastern Nigeria. In South Sudan, almost 100,000 people were on the verge of starvation. At that time, I expressed my deep concern to Member States in two letters calling for urgent action and support for humanitarian and development agencies. I also held a media briefing here in New York on the crisis with the principals of the World Food Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme and representatives of from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UNICEF. In March, I visited Somalia, where I saw at first hand the need for a massive scale-up in international support in order to avert a famine. I heard heartbreaking stories from people who had been forced from their homes by drought, and last month the high-level event on famine during the General Assembly highlighted our continued grave concerns.

The international community responded quickly to the warnings. Donors came forward. Nearly 70 per cent of the funds requested have now been received. Aid operations were scaled up. Humanitarian agencies and their partners are now reaching close to 13 million people each month with life-saving food, nutrition assistance, health care and other support. Development partners have also stepped up by working with humanitarian agencies to link emergency relief with long-term programmes aimed at breaking the cycle of risk and vulnerability. Although we have succeeded in keeping famine at bay, we have not kept suffering at bay. Hunger continues for millions of people. Children under 5 will suffer the mental and physical scars of stunting throughout their whole lives. In fact, in the past nine months, the need for humanitarian aid has increased in those four areas.

The number of people at risk has increased. In South Sudan, approximately 6 million people are severely food-insecure — an increase of 5 million since the beginning of the year. Humanitarian aid is saving lives, but we have not dealt with the one major root cause of those food crises: conflict. Some 80 per cent of the World Food Programme's funding is going to areas affected by armed conflict. Approximately 60 per cent of the 815 million people suffering from hunger today live in the shadow of conflict. Three quarters of the children whose growth has been stunted live in countries affected by conflict. Until those conflicts are resolved and development takes root, communities and entire regions will continue to be ravaged by hunger and suffering.

Let us talk about each of those food crises individually. In north-east Nigeria, some 8.5 million people are now in need of humanitarian aid. There have been tangible improvements in food security in some areas, thanks to the efforts of the Government and humanitarian organizations. However, aid agencies face obstacles because of ongoing attacks by Boko Haram, while operations by the Nigerian military also affect access. We believe that up to 700,000 people in parts of Borno and Yobe states are completely inaccessible and may require urgent support. Two thirds of the health-care facilities in those states have been damaged. Those that are functioning are short of staff and lack safe water, basic drugs and equipment. That poses very serious challenges in dealing with outbreaks of cholera, malaria and measles.

In Somalia, more than 6 million people depend on humanitarian aid for their survival. Aid agencies and their partners face armed conflict, insecurity, blocked roads and unnecessary bureaucracy. Four aid workers were killed in the first eight months of this year, and there were more than 100 violent incidents affecting aid organizations. Large parts of southern and central Somalia remain under the control or influence of Al-Shabaab. Almost 1.9 million people who need help are beyond the reach of aid agencies. Road access is severely limited by illegal checkpoints and blockades. Al-Shabaab and other non-State armed groups have been targeting humanitarians and confiscating or destroying aid supplies. Meanwhile, the Government frequently imposes bureaucratic obstacles, which include arbitrary taxation and interference in recruitment and the awarding of contracts.

In South Sudan, localized famine has been averted, but severe food insecurity has risen to unprecedented levels. Government and opposition groups are preventing agencies from accessing areas in urgent need, including parts of the Equatorias and the Greater Upper Nile region, and areas to the south and west of Wau. Nineteen aid workers have been killed since January, and more than 440 have had to be relocated. Humanitarian supplies are being regularly looted from convoys and compounds. More than 830 incidents relating to access have been reported this year, more than half of which involved violence against humanitarian agencies. That amounts to more than one such incident against humanitarians per day. Both Government and opposition forces are implicated. The collapse of the economy has led to widespread violence and increased criminality, thereby making the delivery of food aid even more dangerous.

In Yemen, the World Food Programme and its partners helped avert famine by reaching 7 million people in August — an increase of more than 60 per cent since the first half of this year, but many millions of people continue to suffer. Approximately 700,000 people in areas of the Sa'ada, Hajjah, Al Hudaydah and Taizz governorates are hard to reach because of bureaucratic obstacles, air strikes, shelling and ground clashes. Both the alliance of those loyal to Abdulmalik al-Houthi and Ali Abdullah Saleh, which controls the capital, Sana'a, and the Government of Yemen have imposed restrictions on the movement and transportation of humanitarian personnel and aid. An economic blockade has led to an increase in fuel costs of more than 50 per cent and in food costs by 30 per cent over pre-crisis levels. Meanwhile, the world's largest cholera epidemic has resulted in some 800,000 suspected cases and more than 2,000 deaths.

The parties to conflict in all four of those countries have stated their commitment to humanitarian law and human rights law, but most of them have not followed through. I call on them and those with influence over them to translate that commitment into practical measures and to address impunity immediately. That means allowing and facilitating the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, imposing constraints only in good faith, and respecting and protecting humanitarian personnel and supplies.

I also call for urgent measures to address the root causes of conflict, improve access and mitigate human suffering. Specifically, I ask the Council to continue to engage in and support the political process in Somalia, and encourage the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states to stabilize their relationship. Worryingly, we can see that that process is not going as smoothly as we would like. Without progress in the political and security areas, any improvements in the humanitarian situation will be only temporary.

It is critical to clarify key issues defining the federal states, including the division of powers and agreements on revenue and resource-sharing between the federal and state Governments. I welcome the efforts by the Government and several federal states to improve access by unblocking routes and removing illegal checkpoints, and I call for continued progress on that issue. In Nigeria, I encourage the Government and its counterparts in the Lake Chad Basin region to develop a regional strategy to address the root causes of the crisis there.

I urge all partners to step up efforts to provide humanitarian aid, as well as long-term solutions for sustainable development. It is critical that a greater civilian presence be established in the newly accessible areas, and I welcome the Government's efforts to achieve that. In Yemen, we face increasing constraints and interference by the alliance of Houthis and Ali Abdullah Saleh, which controls Sana'a, as the Government of Yemen and its partners from the coalition led by Saudi Arabia attempt to restore legitimacy. I call on all parties to ensure unhindered access to people in need. I repeat the call for the payment of civil servants' salaries and the effective and continued operation of the port of Al Hudaydah. What is needed most is for the parties to return to the negotiation table and focus on reaching agreement. Member States with influence on them must also play their role.

Finally, I urge the parties to the conflict in South Sudan to come to terms urgently, so as to prevent increased food insecurity and refugee movements, which threaten to destabilize the region, and continued human suffering and misery. I encourage all Member States to support the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's high-level revitalization forum, which has gained momentum in recent weeks. I urge the Government to facilitate access to people in need, to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and supplies, and to remove bureaucratic impediments to aid.

Last month, the United Nations food and nutrition agencies released a report entitled *The State of Food*

Security and Nutrition in the World. The report underlined that we are now seeing a reversal in the long-term decline in hunger. Conflict and violations of international humanitarian law inevitably increase vulnerability to all kinds of threats, including food insecurity, which in turn causes people to flee. The World Food Programme estimates that a 1 per cent increase in food insecurity leads to a 2 per cent increase in refugees.

Conflict in one country places demands on its neighbours to provide food and basic services to refugees. That can lead to further instability, affecting the security of an entire region and beyond. Prevention must, as always, be our watchword. Early famine-warning mechanisms have worked well in north-eastern Nigeria, Yemen, Somalia and South Sudan. We will continue to support famine prevention and humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian aid and strengthened respect for international law must be complemented by investment in sustainable peace and comprehensive long-term solutions.

Those countries are dealing with violent extremism at the same time as they are being hit by economic recession and low oil prices. They present powerful examples of the complex and multidimensional challenges that we face. They require a system-wide approach that addresses the humanitarian-development nexus and its link to peace. Development agencies must engage early on with innovative solutions. The World Bank has shown that it is possible to scale up development-oriented programmes, complementing the humanitarian response, even in fragile countries like Yemen. I welcome those efforts, which must include the involvement of regional neighbours and front-line States.

In the long term, we must focus on what communities and countries need in order to emerge from protracted conflict and instability. We must help people not only to survive, but also to thrive. Right now, we must urgently commit to increasing humanitarian aid and funding the programmes that we have in place. Wherever we have not prevented or resolved conflict, we must support its victims and survivors. It is unconscionable that aid agencies must make life-or-death decisions about who should receive aid, owing to a shortage of resources. I am grateful for the solidarity shown and urge continued commitment and support.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): I would like to join you, Mr. President, in welcoming the Secretary-General to the Security Council today for this important briefing, and thank him for his sobering and comprehensive briefing. The Secretary-General's call for action in February should not have been necessary. However, by giving his voice to some of the most vulnerable people in our world, he may have made it possible to avoid a humanitarian disaster of massive proportions. His early warning to the Council, asking for our support in addressing an acute risk of famine in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria, triggered the early action needed to prevent a catastrophe.

That type of interaction between the Council and the Secretary-General, with prevention at its heart, presents a model for the future, particularly as humanitarian crises are increasingly being driven by conflict. The Council's presidential statement, proposed by Sweden and others, makes it clear that ongoing conflicts and violence are having devastating humanitarian consequences. Moreover, those conflicts are, at the same time, hindering an effective humanitarian response, leading to shocking levels of human suffering, including famine, in those situations. That is a worrying trend.

The Secretary-General's consistent leadership and advocacy for the humanitarian and longer-term response to the threat of famine has been invaluable. Since his call to action, the international community has mobilized, and humanitarian efforts have been scaled up in all four countries. Yet, as was pointed out today, much is still needed. I would like to make three points this afternoon on the response so far and what more can be done.

First, I pay tribute to the women and men of local communities who have been at the forefront of the response to those crises. I also pay tribute to the humanitarian workers, who risk their lives to save others. They must receive our full support. We are appalled by the lack of humanitarian access and continuing attacks on humanitarians, as well as on hospitals, clinics and medical personnel. That is unacceptable and endangers the lives of humanitarians, as well as undermining their ability to save the lives of others. As has been stressed by the Council before, the full respect by all parties for international humanitarian law is essential.

We welcome the generous response from international donors to the Secretary-General's

call to action. Ambitious commitments have been made by donors at successive donor conferences in Oslo, London and Geneva. Sweden, for its part, has supported the response in the four countries with more than $131 million in bilateral humanitarian assistance. The flexible and time-critical humanitarian funding available from the Central Emergency Response Fund, which has so far allocated $118 million, has also been particularly important in kick-starting the humanitarian response.

As the Secretary-General said last month, keeping famine at bay does not mean keeping suffering at bay. For that reason, we welcome the strengthened engagement by development actors as part of a more comprehensive response that seeks to build long-term resilience. We also welcome the renewed, deepening and active partnership between the United Nations and the World Bank, which is an essential part of the work to break the cycle of vulnerability, need and humanitarian response.

Secondly, while we can rightly welcome the response to the Secretary-General's call to action, we must also recognize that we have failed collectively by allowing those crises to develop to their current level on our watch. Widespread food insecurity, as well as the risk of famine, remains in those four countries, as well as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and, sadly, in an unacceptable number of other places. What those crises have in common is that they are not accidents or natural disasters but man-made catastrophes, driven by conflicts and violence. Yes, we need more funding; yes, we need more access; but that will not end those crises or stop new ones from emerging. There must be political solutions to the conflicts that are driving those entirely preventable humanitarian crises, exponentially increasing the needs and suffering that make a robust humanitarian and longer-term response so much harder. Ending such conflicts also means tackling the root causes that are driving them, including underdevelopment, inequality and exclusion, which are, in turn, exacerbated by the effects of climate change. We need to make, build and sustain peace. We all have a role to play in such longer-term response strategies — as host communities, Governments, regional partners, humanitarian donors and members of the Council.

Lastly, Sweden took the initiative of proposing a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14) on the risk of famine in those four contexts and the humanitarian response. We did so because we believed that it was important to ensure that the full weight of the Security Council was behind the Secretary-General's call to action. The issue of how conflicts are driving humanitarian crises and preventing the humanitarian community from responding is not unique to the four countries addressed in the presidential statement. Delivering essential humanitarian assistance to those most in need is a challenge that humanitarian agencies are increasingly faced with as they seek to carry out their lifesaving work.

The Security Council has a role to play in ensuring that those agencies can do their job when a conflict with devastating humanitarian consequences, a conflict that hinders an effective humanitarian response, creates the risk of an outbreak of famine. We are ready to continue to lead on humanitarian issues in complex emergencies during the remainder of our term on the Council and to work with present and future members to explore further Council action. In that regard, and as a first step, we will welcome an update from the Secretary-General in early 2018 on where we stand in relation to the challenges that have been outlined today, on any lessons learned that could be applied more broadly and on what further support is needed from the Council to address those challenges and prevent further suffering. We are committed to standing with the Secretary-General in those efforts.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. Eight months ago he issued an urgent wake-up call to the world as the threat of famine and the threat of millions starving to death loomed large over the people of Somalia, South Sudan, north-eastern Nigeria and Yemen. Today, thanks to his call to action and the global efforts that followed, famine has been kept at bay. And yet that is no cause for celebration. As the Secretary-General said in his briefing, the absence of famine is not the absence of need. Hunger by any other name is still hunger. In each of the countries I just mentioned, the need remains colossal — overwhelming, in fact — and even greater than it was in February.

In Somalia, more than 3 million people are going to bed hungry. The same can be said for more than 5 million in north-eastern Nigeria. In South Sudan, there are literally more people without food than with. More than half of the population — more than 6 million people — are severely food insecure. And in Yemen, as we heard earlier this week, more than 17 million people

are now food insecure, nearly 7 million of whom are just one step away from famine.

If only to deepen the tragedy further, in all four of those countries the impact falls most acutely on women, girls and children. As the Council well knows, the long-term solution to all those crises is ending and preventing conflict, but long-term fixes alone are no good when hunger kills in the short-term. We need aid to reach people in need quickly, and as the Council, we need to find the political will necessary to overcome the barriers that too often prevent that from happening. We need only look to South Sudan, where fighters from each side accuse civilians of feeding or being fed by the enemy. Access restrictions, bureaucratic impediments and attacks on humanitarian workers continue to delay the delivery of lifesaving assistance, with more than 1,600 access incidents reported since the start of 2016 — that is, the delivery of food being denied to those most in need, at least twice a day, for nearly two years.

In north-east Nigeria it is a similar story, with aid agencies unable to access many of those in need due to continuing fighting between Boko Haram and Government forces. As a priority, the Government of Nigeria must protect civilians and provide unimpeded humanitarian access. In parallel, the Government should set out clear steps for ending the conflict that do not depend on military measures alone. Sustainable peace can only be achieved by addressing the root causes of the violence.

In Yemen, the gravest humanitarian situation today, food is the biggest weapon and lack of food is the biggest killer. The Council is being very clear this week about the need for increased commercial and humanitarian access into and across Yemen, including through increased capacity at all Yemeni ports, particularly Al Hudaydah. We also need to see public-sector salaries paid regularly across the country, starting with the health, water, sanitation and waste-management sectors to stem cholera and preserve essential Government services.

It is only in Somalia that drought is partially responsible for the situation. Even there, the war remains the principal trigger of and contributor to the unfolding humanitarian tragedy. Access restrictions are again a central cause of the crisis, with impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance at the federal and state levels, as well as hefty, illicit fees that limit reach and increase delivery costs.

In conclusion, what we are witnessing in all of those countries is the return of hunger as a weapon of war. The destruction of farms, livestock herds and markets, the blocks on humanitarian aid and access for commercial goods are all deliberate tactics to decrease people's access to adequate nutrition and health care. We need to recognize that it is happening as a result of political decisions. So in turn, the Council must bring its own political pressure to bear on those responsible and hold them to account. We have the power and duty to influence their behaviour in the right direction. It is time to say that enough is enough.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): I thank the Secretary-General for his briefing. We appreciate his leadership and voice in raising the alarm about the nations on the verge of famine today. The humanitarian needs in north-east Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen are unprecedented. Those countries are experiencing what is being called the most vicious of vicious spirals, where conflict compounds food and health-care shortages, which in turn compound the risk of disease. All four countries are experiencing devastating cholera outbreaks. The plagues seem to come one after the other, but they are not the result of the wrath of God but of the acts of men. In too many cases, they are the acts of leaders who are more interested in power or personal gain than the safety and security of their own people.

In August, the Council acknowledged that unfortunate reality when we declared that famine is an issue of international peace and security (S/PRST/2017/14). Those conflicts threaten us all. People without access to food, water, basic services and economic opportunities are more likely to turn to armed and extremist groups. Epidemics, like cholera, can spread across borders. It is not a drought or some other natural disaster that has caused the largest food-security emergency since the Second World War. The main reason that there is a risk of famine in Yemen, South Sudan, north-east Nigeria and Somalia is that fighters are not letting food get to those who need it. In some cases there are reports that warring parties are trying to starve entire communities into submission. That is horrifying and demands the Council's full and immediate attention.

Many have responded to the urgent need for assistance in these four countries. At the opening of

the General Assembly, the United States announced more than $575 million in additional aid, bringing our total contribution to populations affected by this crisis to more than $2.4 billion in 2017. We urge all States Members of the United Nations to join us and do their part. But more funding, however necessary, will not be enough. In most cases, access to desperate people is the key problem. Food aid may be available, but the assistance cannot be delivered to those in need. That is especially true in South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen. In South Sudan, a massive humanitarian response helped to roll back famine earlier this summer, but the pervasive conflict in South Sudan has left half the population facing life-threatening hunger.

Armed groups and bureaucratic impediments frequently prevent or delay the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and attacks on aid workers are increasing at an alarming rate. Since 2013, 85 humanitarian workers have been killed in South Sudan alone — 18 were killed this year. In Yemen, the people are simultaneously facing the world's worst cholera outbreak and the world's largest food-security emergency. Like elsewhere, women and children are suffering the most. There is no military solution in Yemen. A lasting end to the violence will come only through a comprehensive political agreement. But the humanitarian needs in Yemen will not wait for a political process. All sides must do everything in their power to alleviate the suffering of civilians in Yemen.

There are practical steps that can be taken now, today, to facilitate the delivery of food, fuel and medicine to desperate people. These steps begin with increasing capacity for aid delivery and allowing humanitarian access in all of Yemen. In Nigeria, as well, attacks by Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continue to prevent aid from being delivered. The United States is fully committed to working with our Nigerian partners to defeat terrorists, but the needs of the 5.2 million suffering Nigerians must be addressed. The Nigerian Government must do more to streamline assistance deliveries and allow humanitarian workers to reach all civilians in need. In Somalia, unprecedented donor contributions and the effective leadership of the Federal Government of Somalia have helped avert famine thus far, but the threat persists. There too, terrorists and other armed groups impede the humanitarian response.

In each of those four countries, avoiding famine means making sure that aid can be delivered to the hungry. There is no excuse for a delay. All members of the Council and the international community must come together to hold all actors on the ground accountable. When they block aid, we have to call them out. When they do not allow the safe passage of humanitarian workers, we have to insist that aid workers can operate without fear for their safety and can access all populations in need.

The job of the Council is the promotion and maintenance of peace, security and human rights. Famine prevention is an important part of our mandate. Famine is both the result of the breakdown in peace, security and human rights, and the contributor to further violence and insecurity. We request the Council's sustained attention to this good and necessary work. We asked that we not stop at words and donations alone. Let us go one step further to hold those preventing access accountable for their crimes.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The Senegalese delegation thanks the French presidency for the holding of this important meeting on the issue of famine, which requires a coordinated, effective, lasting or even definitive international response.

Let me also thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his important briefing and for his ongoing decisive efforts to mobilize the international community to fight famine.

In addition to costing millions of people their lives, famine foments social instability and perpetuates the vicious circle of poverty and aid dependency. What is worse, in situations of conflict, it dangerously increases the vulnerability of the populations affected, especially children, women and the elderly.

That is no doubt why, at the beginning of the year, the Secretary-General rightly sounded the alarm, so as to draw the attention of all Member States to the plight of the millions of people threatened by famine in several countries, including in north-east Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen, to name only the most urgent and concerning cases; a total of 20 million people are at risk.

This humanitarian crisis, possibly the worst since the end of the Second World War — as the then Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs pointed out during his briefing to the Security Council last March (see S/PV.7897) — could get even worse if we do not act

quickly, especially in terms of access, the mobilization of funds and sustainable political solutions.

In Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and the north-east part of Nigeria, the challenges to humanitarian action are primarily linked to difficulties in accessing people in need and to conflict-related insecurity. That is why we reiterate our call on all parties to those conflicts to comply with international humanitarian law, by which they are bound to ensure the protection of civilians, including their property, as well as of civilian infrastructure, and to allow full and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance.

Moreover, the response to the crisis requires immediate, adequate and easily mobilized funding. In that regard, we welcome the fact that more than 60 per cent of the $4.9 billion needed to respond urgently to the identified needs in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-eastern Nigeria has been secured. We encourage more contributions from both States and the private sector so as to enable the full implementation of existing assistance programmes, including the humanitarian response plans developed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

At the beginning of my statement, I spoke of the need for a lasting or even definitive response to the famine crisis, as my delegation is convinced that the world has the necessary resources, capacity and means to permanently eradicate hunger and the spectre of starvation in the world, once and for all.

Moreover, the impact of any alternative approach, even if based on immediate and unhindered access, adequate and available funding and a quicker and more robust mobilization of humanitarian and development actors, would of necessity be limited in terms of time and space.

Additionally, since conflicts are the cause of many cases of famine, the Security Council, as the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, must use all means at its disposal to engage the parties involved in good faith in the quest for political solutions. In our view, it is the only way to put a lasting end to the suffering of peoples.

Senegal is convinced of the virtues of prevention. As such, it calls for reliable and rigorous warning systems that are based on honest cooperation with all relevant stakeholders, in particular regional and subregional organizations, in order to prevent, to the extent possible, the outbreak of conflict. My delegation also deems it key that we work to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to solve economic, social and cultural problems.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the commitment of Senegal to sparing no effort to ensure a successful international mobilization. In addition to the tribute I paid earlier to the Secretary-General for his dedicated actions, I would like also to extend my gratitude to all organizations and to all stakeholders in general — whether within the United Nations or within non-governmental organizations — that participate in the humanitarian sphere to help the millions of crisis victims.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): We thank Secretary-General Guterres for his very insightful briefing on the stark and painful reality of the suffering caused by the risk of famine in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-eastern Nigeria. In line with the presidential statement on famine adopted in early August (S/PRST/2017/14), we commend the Secretary-General for his bold and timely call for the world community to respond to those threats.

At the same time, we acknowledge with deep appreciation the unfailing efforts of United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations to alleviate the large-scale catastrophes that are affecting more than 20 million people in those countries. Yet despite those efforts, the statistics we have heard today are shocking and should awaken us to the realization that what we are witnessing is now at its worst since the end of the Second World War and the founding of the United Nations itself.

While as Council members we express our grave concern, we must go beyond expressions of solidarity and immediately address the problem with workable strategies. One of the major reasons for famine in the countries under discussion is that they are all affected by ongoing armed conflicts and violence, which interfere with people's livelihoods and access to markets and create widespread displacement, further aggravated by climate change. It is clear that military solutions can never be an option, because they only exacerbate tensions, leading to more tragedies and food insecurity. Furthermore, it is obvious that unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment and the unsustainable use of land and water and exploitation of natural resources will further escalate the potential for widespread famine.

The interconnected nature of today's humanitarian crises and the importance of strengthening the security-development nexus were clearly visible during the Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin region in March and will no doubt be confirmed during its upcoming visit to the Sahel region next week. It is clear that the response to famine requires strength and connectivity between political solutions and long-term development strategies. Humanitarian crises require billions of dollars, and there are deficits in the delivery on pledges. Our calls for more funding to breach the shortfalls are often futile, despite the best intentions and political will of Member States, owing to competing claims all over the world. It is therefore vital to harness international assistance with the funds received in order to boost resilience and overcome the divide between the humanitarian and development investments.

Our target should be ensuring food security and the protection of rural livelihoods and investments in agriculture, livestock and indigenous means. All of that plays a role in peacemaking — as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has stated — and will help to reduce tensions, especially where food supplies and markets are severely strained. Food security and agriculture should therefore be supported across conflict cycles as well as during sustained peace.

It has also been shown that supporting livelihoods is the best defence in the effort to protect and save lives, foster recovery and strengthen resilience. We should therefore think creatively about the provision of seeds, cash payments, rapid-response kits, treatment and vaccinations to protect livestock and prevent disease outbreaks, and about training community-based workers. Livelihood projects can be a good basis for bringing people together and facilitating local peace processes through community groups. In each of the countries that we are focusing on, we could develop schemes such as cash for work and nutrition and input vouchers.

As the same time, full, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is essential; hence the need for inclusive dialogue with all parties to the conflict so as to eliminate all obstacles preventing aid from being delivered to vulnerable populations. That is a process to be engaged in by the entire United Nations system and its peacekeeping missions and country teams in particular, working alongside Governments and armed groups. We should also seek the support of neighbouring countries and regional organizations and their mechanisms for timely intervention, along with donors, partners and, above all, civil society and local populations. Besides working to ensure the implementation of peace agreements, we must aim to make agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable so as to reduce rural poverty and enable inclusive and efficient food systems, thereby increasing the resilience of human lives.

Mr. Shen Bo (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Secretary-General Guterres for his briefing. Since the beginning of this year, some countries and regions in Africa and West Asia have been suffering severe food shortages and even famine as a result of drought and climate change. Secretary-General Guterres has issued an emergency humanitarian-assistance appeal urging the international community to provide relief to the affected countries. China highly appreciates his initiative and the efforts of the relevant United Nations agencies to alleviate their pain and risk. The Chinese Government is sympathetic to the plight of these countries and their peoples, and has been delivering rapid emergency food assistance through bilateral and multilateral channels to Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Yemen in the amount of ¥190 million, or about $27 million.

The famine and serious humanitarian situations in the countries and regions concerned have improved considerably thanks to the energetic efforts of the international community, but the risks remain, and there is still a considerable shortfall in humanitarian resources. The international community should continue to provide them with the necessary help. First of all, China would like to stress that attention should be given to helping the countries concerned achieve development. Because of inadequate economic and social development, many developing countries are vulnerable in the face of natural disasters such as drought and famine, which in turn have a negative impact on their domestic peace and security. The United Nations should continue to increase its contribution to these countries' development, advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and help the countries concerned accelerate their economic and social development. That will help to eliminate the causes of conflicts and promote sustainable peace through sustainable development.

Secondly, the various United Nations entities should conduct their work according to their mandates and

improve their division of labour and cooperation. As the organ with primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the Security Council should focus on helping the countries and regions concerned address issues of peace and security. On that basis, it should play an active role in coordinating and enhancing communication and cooperation with other United Nations agencies and relevant international organizations working in areas such as development, humanitarian relief and children's issues. Particular attention should be paid to fully leveraging the positive role of regional and subregional organizations and thereby forging synergies within the international community in addressing various problems.

Thirdly, we call on the international community to uphold the concept of community and the common destiny of mankind by continuing to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal to provide humanitarian assistance to the countries and regions concerned. At the same time, we must uphold the principle of country ownership, taking into consideration the practical needs, level of development and priorities of the countries in question. Formulating targeted assistance programmes with a focus on helping the affected countries improve their capacities with regard to food production, storage, transportation and reprocessing, as well as ensuring better nutrition for children, will enhance the countries' capacity to generate their own food while we support them with emergency sustenance.

China stands ready to work jointly with the rest of the international community to help the affected countries and peoples surmount this difficult time and contribute to achieving world peace, security and sustainable development.

Ms. Guadey (Ethiopia): We thank the Secretary-General for his briefing today on the humanitarian situation in the four areas under discussion and for his personal leadership in the efforts to respond to the crisis. We have been discussing the humanitarian situation in each of these countries separately, but today's briefing gives us the opportunity to have a comprehensive look at the unprecedented level of the humanitarian needs and threat of famine facing Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria, which requires a global response. Unless the international community takes urgent and concerted action, millions of lives will be in grave danger. Of course, we realize that the underlying causes and the gravity of the situation are not the same in all of these areas. We therefore believe that the humanitarian response should be tailored to fit the particularities of each situation.

One thing that could be an element common to all four situations is the devastating impact of climate change. That, coupled with the ongoing conflicts and violence in the four areas, has left many people on the brink of famine. That kind of trend — a conflict-exacerbating, climate-induced humanitarian crisis — poses serious threats to global peace and security and to development agendas. That is why it requires concerted and urgent global action. Mobilizing the necessary support to deliver lifesaving assistance to those in need in the short term and investing to build resilience in the long term are therefore extremely critical.

Moreover, ensuring safe and sustained humanitarian access so as to facilitate the delivery and assistance of aid, and ending armed violence through comprehensive political dialogue, is crucial, since there is only so much that humanitarian assistance can achieve in the absence of peace and security. In that regard, we would like to stress the importance of ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian operations and personnel. Humanitarian actors face enormous challenges, including risks to their own lives as they provide support to people in need. Ensuring safe, timely and unhindered access for humanitarian assistance is extremely important for the provision of an effective humanitarian response, and all parties to the various conflicts should be called on to cooperate in that regard.

While appreciating what the international community has been done so far to reach out to those in need of urgent assistance and avert a humanitarian catastrophe, we realize that a lot more remains to be done. There is an urgent need to step up efforts to provide humanitarian assistance in order to save lives and support the people of Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-eastern Nigeria. The funding gap in all four of those areas is huge, and we call on the international community to provide additional resources and find funds for the relief efforts. It is also important to ensure that the commitments and pledges that have been made in various international forums are honoured and fulfilled.

Finally, we appreciate the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners in extremely difficult circumstances. We remain ready to support the Secretary-General's call for action to avert famine in conflict-affected countries, and encourage

him to continue to provide early warnings when a conflict that is producing devastating humanitarian consequences and hindering an effective humanitarian response also runs the risk of leading to an outbreak of famine.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his presence and his briefing, especially for the clarity of his message and proposal.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria is certainly alarming. The crises in those regions are concentrated in fragile communities that are experiencing serious conflicts or are threatened by terrorist groups, and in areas that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Let us be clear. The world produces more than enough food to meet the needs of its entire population. It is the actions of humans that result in such unprecedented humanitarian crises, through armed conflicts that displace populations and the destruction of productive infrastructure and food-distribution channels.

We must act urgently to respond to the grave humanitarian situation in Somalia, which has been exacerbated by years of conflict and insecurity that have the potential to derail the country's political development and the legitimacy of Federal and state institutions. We should redouble our coordinated efforts to meet immediate needs and strengthen future resilience.

With regard to Yemen, the violence produced by the armed conflict and the paralysis in the peace process are causing great suffering to Yemeni civilians. With each passing day, that suffering further jeopardizes the country's humanitarian situation, which is on the brink of collapse, aggravated by famine, the spread of cholera and difficulties in delivering aid. The three years of conflict in Yemen have led to a catastrophic humanitarian situation and the world's most serious food-security crisis. Millions of people need assistance, in the form of food, water and medicine, to survive.

It is the civilians who are paying the highest price for this war, as they lose their lives. Ending the suffering caused by such man-made crises is possible, but it will only happen when the parties return to the negotiating table — without preconditions and in good faith — and agree to put an end to the armed conflict. Recalling the provisions of resolution 2286 (2016), we emphasize that aerial attacks on schools and hospitals, where the most vulnerable, innocent civilians are to be found, are despicable and unacceptable. We reiterate once again that the rebels in Yemen do not control its airspace, which means that those bloody attacks are being perpetrated by other forces. Sadly, when such attacks are carried out, we are putting the future of the whole of Yemeni society, especially children, in jeopardy. The widespread violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law that all the warring parties have committed are unfortunately now common currency in Yemen.

With regard to the crisis in South Sudan, Mr. Stephen O'Brien, the former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told the Council in March (see S/PV.7897) that the famine that the people of South Sudan are enduring is man-made. Those who are inciting and perpetuating the conflict there are complicit in the people's starvation.

There is a multidimensional crisis in north-eastern Nigeria, with many factors sowing seeds of instability in the region. In an area whose economy is dependent on agricultural activity and where 5 million people are suffering from food insecurity, climate change, drought and the terrorist threat presented by Boko Haram are wreaking ever greater havoc.

We have said that these situations are man-made. It is therefore also up to humankind — all of us — to bring an end to that suffering, identify those responsible and make sure that they are held accountable for their actions.

If I may, I would like to point out that another victim of these horrors, besides the innocent civilians suffering from famine around the world, is our own consciousness. I would ask my colleagues to think about the words that we use to talk about this situation. We have become used to antiseptic euphemisms that protect us from harsh realities. Today we often talk about food insecurity. What that actually means is that there is no food. We often talk about severe food insecurity. What that actually means is that there are people who on the verge of famine. Or we say that people are enduring livelihood crises. What we are really saying is that they do not have the most minimal amount of food that a person needs to survive. I believe we must stop being indifferent to such perversities.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing and his

outstanding commitment to addressing the issue at hand.

The unprecedented level of global humanitarian needs, exemplified by the food crises that more than 20 million people are facing in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria, is an urgent problem. The conflicts and violence in those countries present both short- and long-term obstacles to an effective humanitarian response and as a result represent the main drivers of hunger.

The situation in Yemen is especially alarming. Millions of people there are facing a triple threat of food shortages, cholera and violence. Fifteen million lack adequate access to clean water, sanitation, hygiene and health services, and 7 million are at risk of famine. Ukraine commends the United Nations and other humanitarian actors for delivering lifesaving assistance to the Yemeni people, and we especially appreciate the efforts of the World Food Programme, which provided aid to 7 million people in August alone. We urge the parties to ensure the sustainable delivery of commercial and humanitarian supplies.

We are no less concerned about the plight of the millions of Somalis who are in need of assistance owing to malnutrition and food insecurity, armed conflict and climate issues. As a result, nearly half of the population, most of them women and children, require humanitarian assistance, and not just with food; even water has become a luxury for more than 4.5 million people.

Ukraine commends humanitarian actors' collective efforts to ease the famine conditions in South Sudan, but, with a record-high 1.7 million people still on the brink of famine, that does not mean that the food insecurity there is over.

North-eastern Nigeria is another example of acute food insecurity. During the Security Council's visit to the Lake Chad basin, we saw that challenge at first hand, together with its complex root causes, which include aspects related to security, terrorism, climate change and development.

The single biggest factor depriving local populations of access to even the most basic needs is violence. In other words, the current hunger crises unfolding before our eyes are, above all, man-made, which means that they would be fully preventable if it were not for the irresponsible actions of human beings. In the light of that fact, we welcome and fully support the joint efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to pursue every possible way to end the conflicts in these countries, including by addressing their underlying root causes comprehensively and sustainably. At the same time, we deplore the fact that in the conflict-afflicted countries of Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-eastern Nigeria, the parties to those conflicts have all too often failed to ensure unfettered and sustained access for deliveries of vital food assistance and other forms of humanitarian aid. We call on all the parties to armed conflicts to respect and protect civilians. It is also important to recall that the obligation to uphold international humanitarian law applies not only to direct participants in conflicts but also to those who have influence on them. Another imperative is the security of humanitarian personnel in conflict-affected countries. We therefore call on all parties to respect and protect medical and educational facilities and personnel.

Ukraine highly appreciates the efforts of the international community aimed at the long-term recovery and resilience of the countries in question. Ukraine stands ready to contribute to that vital endeavour with the goal of keeping famine and human suffering at bay.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy): I join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his briefing and for his commitment to resolving such critical issues as the famines in the four countries under discussion.

Italy remains deeply concerned about the devastating levels of extremism, instability, violence and conflict that currently exist around the world and have resulted in famine conditions and starvation chiefly in four regions — South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and north-eastern Nigeria — thereby affecting more than 20 million people. Let us say it clearly. This is perhaps the largest humanitarian crisis that the world has ever witnessed, with a particularly devastating impact on the most vulnerable, including women, children and persons with disabilities.

Since we last discussed those issues in the Security Council — in the Arria-formula meeting that Italy organized with other partners in June and in the presidential statement adopted in August (S/PRST/2017/14) — the situation has not improved. On the contrary, despite the fact that the famine in South Sudan has been contained, the number of people suffering from food insecurity has reached a record

of more than 800 million around the world. There is therefore no more time to lose if we wish to prevent the worst effects of such crises and counter those that are already going on. Italy has always believed in the importance of a consolidated and multidimensional approach to such issues.

First, it is clear that these famines are the result of man-made, conflict-driven crises. However, as we have long advocated, we believe that we should also pay attention to the fact that the relationship between conflict and food insecurity functions in both directions. We have to realize that food insecurity can fuel even more violence, prolong conflicts and bring about the displacement of peoples. In particular, its role as a root cause of forced migration was recently highlighted in the World Food Programme report entitled "At the root of exodus: Food security, conflict and international migration". In that regard, we must step up our efforts to strengthen the resilience of agriculture and food systems at risk, so as to render them less vulnerable to possible future shocks, honouring the commitment that we made last May at the Taormina summit under Italy's presidency of the Group of Seven. In that regard, I also want to recall the seminar that we held last week in Rome on conflicts and hunger, organized by Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme, which was one part of a three-part cycle of seminars aiming at highlighting the link between conflicts and food security as key to tackling those issues in a holistic and effective way.

Secondly, in terms of methodology, we are convinced of the importance of ensuring the Council's backing and engagement on these issues, through early-warning mechanisms and real action, so that we can break the cycle of violence and ensure full humanitarian access and the immediate disbursement of pledged funds. In the specific case of these four famines, I would like to pay tribute to the spirit of initiative and leadership shown by the Secretary-General, who exercised his function of providing early warning to the Council in his February and June letters. If we have been able to provide some effective and timely responses to the ongoing crises, we owe a great deal of that to his initiative.

Thirdly, from a broader perspective, Italy believes that the Security Council's growing commitment this year to humanitarian issues is heading in the right direction, as it clearly falls within its mandate, given the wide-ranging implications of those issues for international peace and security. We must take a holistic approach when dealing with peace and security issues, and we therefore encourage members to keep those issues high on the Council's agenda. That should also be the case in the future, with another possible update to the Council by the Secretary-General coming in the next few months.

Finally, I want to conclude with a thought I had while I on my way to the meeting this afternoon. As I was looking around at the city of New York, after an excellent lunch, I was thinking that we were going to come to this Chamber to talk about famine and hunger. It felt like one of those wake-up calls that we who work here in the Council sometimes have. It is true that we discuss many crises here, but at the end of the day, this is one area where we really can make a difference.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, we would like to thank the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his important briefing today. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank him for his personal commitment and his resolute action on this front.

The increase in food insecurity and the risk of famine in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-eastern Nigeria is worrying not only because the lives of more than 30 million people are at risk, according to figures from the Food and Agriculture Organization, but also because that humanitarian crisis is the result in great part of ongoing armed conflicts and human-generated violence, the consequences of which have an impact on the lives and rights of millions trapped in the middle of those conflicts.

Tragically, the number of victims and other people who have left their homes and livelihoods in droves to escape violence has given rise to an alarming number of forcibly displaced persons — more than 65 million around the world, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. That constant flow of the forcibly displaced has clearly resulted in a cessation of agricultural and productive activities on the one hand, affecting sustainable basic food supplies, and, on the other, severe restrictions on those supplies, producing skyrocketing prices of foodstuffs in local markets. In several cases, the situation has been aggravated by the fact that the parties to the conflicts impose restrictions on the transit routes, ports and airports where imported food as well as other forms of

humanitarian assistance enter those countries to meet the needs of the population.

Climate change is also clearly a determining factor that negatively affects the capacities of countries in crisis to combat food insecurity. However, as has already been said today, food insecurity is exacerbated by the cross-cutting instability that conflicts bring, thereby contributing to a spiral that prolongs that instability.

We must also bear in mind that the high humanitarian costs of such conflicts go hand in hand with the politics of war and enormous expenditures on armaments for conflicts, to the detriment of the well-being of the people. They perpetuate the cycle of poverty, need and confrontation. That is immoral and intolerable. If there is starvation, it is not because there is a lack of food but because of a lack of political will on the part of the parties concerned when it comes to resolving their differences. To that end, we urge the Council, and Member States in general, to maintain a firm, unanimous position with regard to the crises in the four countries under discussion that have led to damaging instability affecting the lives of millions of innocent people. We also call on the parties to the conflicts to ensure the security and integrity of humanitarian facilities and personnel, which must never be seen as military targets for any reason. The principles of international humanitarian law must be upheld at all times.

We believe that the multiple and complex causes of humanitarian crises in the three countries under discussion and in north-eastern Nigeria call for a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained response from the international community. We must take preventive measures on the basis of early warnings issued by the Secretary-General, as such crises have humanitarian consequences and can lead to famine. We must also strengthen the global information and early-warning system for food and agriculture of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in order to develop preventive measures and create resilience so that such crises can be handled better. In that regard, we support the initiatives of the Secretary-General to address the obstacles that are impeding the efforts to counter famine in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and north-east Nigeria.

In conclusion, we believe that the joint efforts of the international community and the coordinated work of United Nations agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the FAO, among others, are vital to alleviating the fragile humanitarian situation in those countries. We would also like to take this opportunity to express our support and pay tribute to all humanitarian workers, who often risk their own lives in order to help others.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing on the international efforts to avert famine and to respond to its appearance in conflict-affected areas in Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan and north-eastern Nigeria. I also commend the efforts of the United Nations and the international community in response to the Secretary-General's early-warning call for action against famine earlier this year.

In Somalia, this crisis is not one of famine alone but also has many political and security aspects, given the increasing number of displaced persons and the ensuing competition for scarce natural resources, which will ultimately threaten the recent but fragile political and security gains in Somalia. We are also concerned about the obstacles to humanitarian access for those affected by the crisis in various parts of Somalia, especially those created by the Al-Shabaab terrorist movement. It will be important to redouble efforts to support Somali institutions, not only with regard to the mechanisms needed to address such humanitarian crises, but also in order to prevent those crises and provide early warnings and responses to them.

In South Sudan, despite the fact that economic and climatic factors have colluded to exacerbate the humanitarian situation there, the direct and main reason for the worsening situation lies in the ongoing vicious circle of violence and armed conflict. It is therefore the legal and ethical obligation of the parties to the conflict to cease all forms of violence, observe international law and the relevant international principles relating to civilians and facilitate the rapid, safe and unimpeded access of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan to the affected areas. South Sudan needs the support of international donors and the international community as a whole, since the available resources for addressing the deteriorating humanitarian crisis are still inadequate. We believe that the humanitarian relief efforts cannot be a lasting solution to the crisis and that the only way to resolve the continued humanitarian plight of South Sudan's civilians will be through an inclusive political process that opens prospects for a solution based on the peace agreement.

Egypt is following the emergency food insecurity situation in Yemen with concern, especially given the added danger brought on by the cholera outbreak. These tragedies can be partly blamed on the Houthis' continued refusal to participate seriously in the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to reach a political settlement of the crisis. We reaffirm the importance of reaching a political settlement that can lead to sustainable solutions to the myriad humanitarian challenges in Yemen. The international contributions to the humanitarian response plan should be increased, and pressure should meanwhile be brought to bear on the Houthis to allow the safe passage of humanitarian goods throughout Yemen.

In Nigeria, we commend the efforts of the Government to enhance its national response and scale up its efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in the north-eastern part of the country. The Government has facilitated humanitarian access to the affected areas, provided financial contributions in response to their need, managed large numbers of refugees and displaced persons and developed a comprehensive plan for its humanitarian response, the Buhari Plan for north-eastern Nigeria's reconstruction on the humanitarian, security and development fronts. We urge the international donor community to act rapidly to honour its pledges announced at the Oslo humanitarian conference on Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, held earlier this year, so as to avoid exacerbating the humanitarian situation in north-eastern Nigeria.

Despite the success of our collective efforts to avert famine, the crisis is not yet over. Millions of people in those areas, especially women and children, still cannot meet their most basic needs. The famine crisis has shed light on the importance of improving the coordination of humanitarian assistance and scaling up United Nations early-warning mechanisms. Famines do not come out of the blue or happen by chance. They are actually avoidable.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation agrees that we should not accept the fact that 108 million people around the world, of whom 52 million are children, are starving. We support the determination of the Secretary-General and the plans of the United Nations specialized agencies to draft a strategy to tackle that challenge. We believe that, among other things, the success of our common struggle will depend largely on how correctly we identify the causes behind that issue.

We believe that the premise that hunger is primarily triggered by conflict is extremely simplistic. The presidential statement on hunger and on famine adopted by the Security Council in August (S/PRST/2017/14) rightly noted that conflicts are only one of the factors that cause hunger. It would be wrong to slight the no less and indeed often more obvious reasons for hunger, such as global food-market volatility, global economic stagnation, slow progress in achieving sustainable production and demand, gaps in access to farming and agro-industrial technology, lack of investment, and plain underdevelopment, poverty and inequality. We believe that without accounting for all of these factors, an effective response strategy is hardly possible.

In our view, we can find a solid basis for this argument in the official annual report of the United Nations agencies, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2017*, which the Secretary-General mentioned today. The report states clearly that of the 815 million malnourished people worldwide, 489 million live in conflict-afflicted countries, which means that the remaining 320 million who do not live in such countries are still experiencing equally and sometimes even more severe food shortages. Incidentally, the same report has another noteworthy statistic, which is that the prevalence of hunger in conflict-ridden countries is only between 1.4 per cent and 4.4 per cent higher than in other countries.

Of course, that does not mean that we should pay less attention to the issue of hunger and famine in conflict-afflicted countries. We believe that to seriously improve the food security situation, we should implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensure sustainable agricultural production, make rational use of natural resources and improve effectiveness and modern practices at every stage of the food chain. One current challenge is including the question of balanced nutrition within comprehensive strategies for socioeconomic development. In that regard, the relevant United Nations entities — the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development — have a significant role to play. All of these issues are being fully and productively discussed in the General Assembly.

Russia, as a major producer and exporter of foodstuffs, is making a significant contribution to global and regional food security. Together with major international entities, including the United Nations,

we are implementing a development project designed to ensure food security and sustainable agrarian production for countries in need. In the past 10 years, Russia has delivered humanitarian assistance in the form of a total of 650,000 tons of food supplies to more than 110 States. Furthermore, every year for the past few years Russia has conducted more than 45 humanitarian operations delivering humanitarian assistance amounting to some $120 million. We view the WFP as one of the key channels for delivering food assistance to those in need, and Russia's annual assistance through the WFP totals more than $30 million. We also deliver significant humanitarian aid through the International Civil Defence Organization, amounting to another $30 million. In 2017, recipients of Russian food assistance through the WFP included Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Syria, Palestine, Namibia, Kenya, Iraq and Jordan.

Russia has undertaken considerable efforts in the area of school meals, financing relevant projects in various Central Asian countries through the FAO. Needless to say, we consider aid to countries with acute hunger and famine issues, particularly Yemen, Somalia and South Sudan, to be extremely important. In the past four years, Russia has allocated food assistance to those countries amounting to $8 million through the WFP. Since 2015 we have delivered some 110 tons of humanitarian cargo to Yemen, including two Russian emergency flights this July. Russia intends to continue actively contributing to international efforts to arrive at a comprehensive solution to the problem of ending hunger worldwide.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): I join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his insightful briefing. I would also like to express my appreciation to the United Nations for holding a high-level event on famine prevention and response together with the World Bank in New York last month.

Japan is deeply concerned about the continued serious state of food insecurity in Yemen, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and other countries. The swift delivery of humanitarian assistance is crucial to people suffering from famine. Regrettably, as the Council emphasized through its presidential statement in August (S/PRST/2017/14), conflict and violence are major causes of the food insecurity in most of the cases we are discussing today. Conflicts destroy livelihoods and human food production, force people to flee and hamper food distribution. Furthermore, they impede effective humanitarian access to those most desperately in need of help, and in some cases, starvation has become a part of deliberate strategies to gain or maintain political control or military advantage. I would like to stress once again that the Council must address such problems and contribute to the mitigation, resolution and, if possible, the prevention of food crises.

For that, we need to enable a more robust short and long-term response. The international community must enhance measures to address the root causes of conflicts, not only by making post-conflict responses but also by focusing more on preventing conflicts and their recurrence. To this end, Japan emphasizes the nexus between humanitarian efforts, development and peace. Together with urgent humanitarian assistance, Japan provides development cooperation aimed at promoting mid-to-long-term self-reliance. In the post-conflict phase, we will also supply peacebuilding and conflict-prevention assistance, as well as assistance for poverty reduction and economic development. For example, in Uganda, which is taking in a large number of South Sudanese refugees, Japan is providing, along with urgent humanitarian assistance, projects in the areas of technical assistance with rice farming and vocational training through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and international organizations. That synergy for projects is designed to promote refugees' self-reliance and support host communities, as well as helping refugees prepare for a smooth repatriation. We believe that such assistance will facilitate and stabilize South Sudan's development when its refugees return home, thereby contributing to its peacebuilding and conflict-prevention capacities in the future.

As a first step to exercising this approach to famine response, Japan has decided to provide a new emergency-aid grant in December, totalling $11 million, to South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and north-eastern Nigeria. It will be used for capacity-building assistance to the local people for pest control and monitoring nutrition, for example, along with urgent humanitarian assistance. Japan will enhance measures with the humanitarian development and peace nexus in mind, with the aim of helping countries suffering from famine to overcome their humanitarian crises and achieve sustaining peace.

While the August presidential statement focused on four countries, more are suffering from severe food insecurity. The presidential statement requests the Secretary-General to provide early warning when a conflict that has devastating humanitarian consequences

and hinders an effective humanitarian response has the potential to lead to an outbreak of famine. We continue to count on the efforts of the Secretary-General in that regard so that we can act swiftly and effectively to address the risk of famine and link our efforts to the goal of achieving long-term peace and security.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I would like to begin by thanking the Secretary-General for being the first to alert us in February to the tragic humanitarian situation of the nearly 20 million people in Africa and Yemen on the verge of starvation. The Secretary-General's impetus was crucial to triggering prompt action by the international community to contain the crisis and prevent mass starvation in the countries concerned.

The link between international peace and security and famine is both proven and documented. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan, north-eastern Nigeria, Yemen and Somalia is a shock to our collective consciousness and a sad illustration of that link, since 60 per cent of those affected by food insecurity are in conflict zones. That shows the degree to which it is the Council's responsibility to continue to remain actively seized of the problem. It is why France took the initiative to organize a first Arria-formula meeting in June on the link between famine and conflict, with the welcome participation of the World Bank. Many member States of the Council joined us in that initiative, and subsequently, together with Sweden and the United Kingdom, we drafted a Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/14), adopted in August.

I am particularly grateful to the Secretary-General for continuing to alert us by reporting on developments in the situation we are discussing today. Many points have already been highlighted by previous speakers, and I do not wish to revisit the important points that they have raised. I will limit myself to citing five important lessons. The first is that malnutrition, a consequence of poverty, food insecurity and inadequate development, weakens the most vulnerable populations and aggravates the scale of those tragedies. Chronic food-insecurity situations create conditions that can lead to starvation when crises occur. The working conclusion is that the fight against food insecurity must be a priority for all of us.

The second lesson is that it would not have been possible to cope with the magnitude of the needs without a strong, coordinated and rapid response from the international community. But let us be realistic as well as vigilant. We are not at the end of the road. Far from it, we must continue to intensify our action in financing food aid, and humanitarian aid in particular.

The third lesson is that without safe, comprehensive and unhindered humanitarian access, our efforts to eradicate famine in conflict areas will be useless. Obstacles to humanitarian access, attacks on humanitarian workers and the fact that hunger is still too often used as a weapon of war must be reported, documented and condemned as firmly as possible. Let me point out that such actions may constitute war crimes under international law and should be prosecuted as such. The medieval practice of using sieges to starve entire cities, as we have seen in Syria, is an extreme form of such barbarous practices. The Council must therefore redouble its efforts on such issues and provide practical responses.

The fourth lesson is that such famines are, to a large extent, man-made humanitarian disasters. In that context, only political solutions will make it possible to alleviate the people's suffering. It is therefore up to the Council to find permanent political solutions to the conflicts that worsen a population's food insecurity.

The fifth and last lesson is the accuracy of our shared understanding of the continuum. Preventing and fighting famines is both a requirement of preventive diplomacy and an illustration of the fact that in order to be effective and produce results on the ground, the United Nations must make progress on the dual fronts of peace and development, including its humanitarian dimension. The presence of the Secretary-General here today has an undeniable galvanizing effect, and that is why I would like to join Sweden and several other members in appealing to the Secretary-General to come back to this subject in the Council. The Security Council must remain mobilized, and France will continue to play its full part in that.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.